



5 December 2003/Friday

Dear Arlington County CERT member:

The white stuff has arrived early this year and it's projected we'll be receiving a lot of it over the next few months. As a CERT member – and as a responsible citizen and good neighbor – there are a number of things you can do to prepare for and respond to whatever Mother Nature brings us this winter.

First, make sure your shelter-in-place supplies are well-stocked and current (check those expiration dates!). Nasty winter weather, especially ice storms and heavy snowfall, can result in power outages that will make flashlights, battery-operated radios, and non-perishable food a necessity. Encourage your friends and neighbors to check their own supplies, as well. Remember the flashlight and battery shortage associated with Hurricane Isabel?!

Second, make sure you keep needed safety supplies in your vehicle. That may include drinking water and some energy bars, a first aid kit, flashlight, and fire extinguisher and, especially this time of year, a shovel, some sand (for traction), boots, warm clothing, and a blanket. And, of course, your fully-stocked CERT bag! Also, keep your gas tank full and check your antifreeze and windshield washer fluid.

Third, check your shovel and ice-melt supply at home. When it snows, clear your walks so others – including your mail carrier and holiday delivery people -- are safe. Remember, lift with your legs, not your back, when shoveling. If there are elderly or infirm in your neighborhood, you might want to check in on them (perhaps wearing your snazzy CERT vest) to be sure they have food and water and, if necessary, to do some shoveling.

Fourth, help out where you can. If we do experience high winds and there are trees or power lines down in your neighborhood, make sure the appropriate utilities and, in the case of power lines, the police and fire departments, have been notified. If a hazard exists, you can help by keeping people clear of the debris or downed lines until help arrives. DO NOT attempt to clear any debris near downed lines yourself. Wait for the

professionals to arrive and then ask if there's anything you can do to assist them. They may need you to redirect traffic or people, so don't forget your hard hat and high-visibility vest! If a response will be delayed, make an effort to block access using caution tape or some of your bright colored triage tape. Another winter opportunity to help often occurs when hospitals need people with four-wheel drive vehicles to help get staff to work. If you have such a vehicle, consider volunteering to be a hospital taxi for a few hours.

If it does become necessary to activate the CERT this winter – for a weather-related or other emergency -- you will be contacted via e-mail and/or telephone and told where to report. In the meantime, if you are planning on being out of the area for an extended period of time over the holidays (more than a couple days), it might be a good idea to let your CERT team coordinator know. If you don't have a team coordinator, let Cynthia Kellams know (clkellams@aol.com).

Stay tuned to local television and news radio stations (WTOP 1500 AM) for weather related closings and other information. You might also want to check in with the following websites from time to time to see what's going on ...

Arlington County
www.co.arlington.va.us

National Weather Service
www.nws.noaa.gov

Virginia Department of Emergency Management
www.vdem.state.va.us

And one more thing ... if you haven't already done so, you should register to receive emergency alerts through the County's ROAM system. In the event of an emergency, those registered receive text messages via their cell phones, computers, pagers and other PDA devices. We may also use ROAM as a means of activating the CERT in the future. You can sign up by going to www.arlingtonalert.com and clicking "Register".

Be safe and stay warm!